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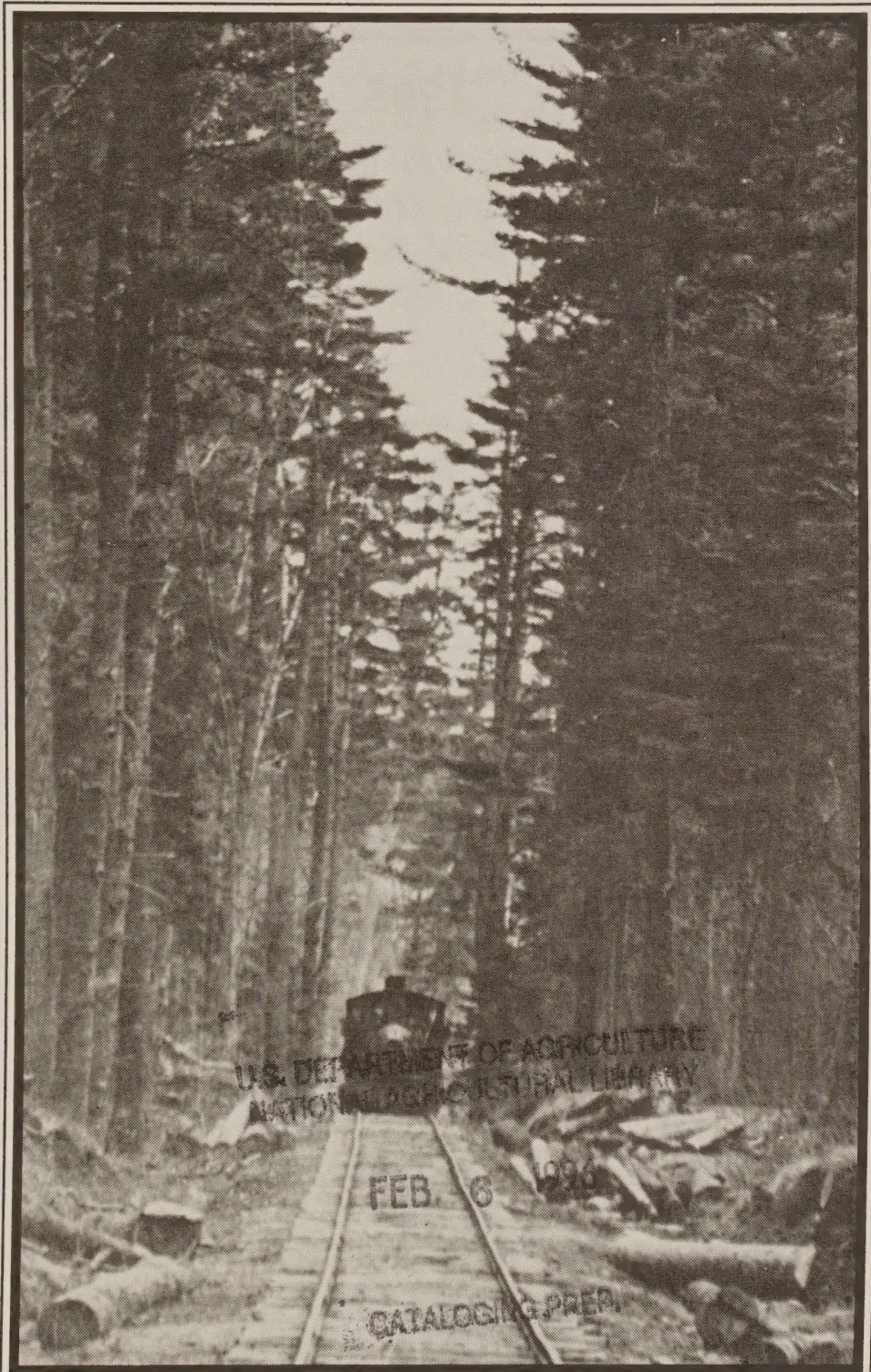
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Black Lake Trail

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A Logging History
of Black Lake



Chequamegon National Forest

Forest



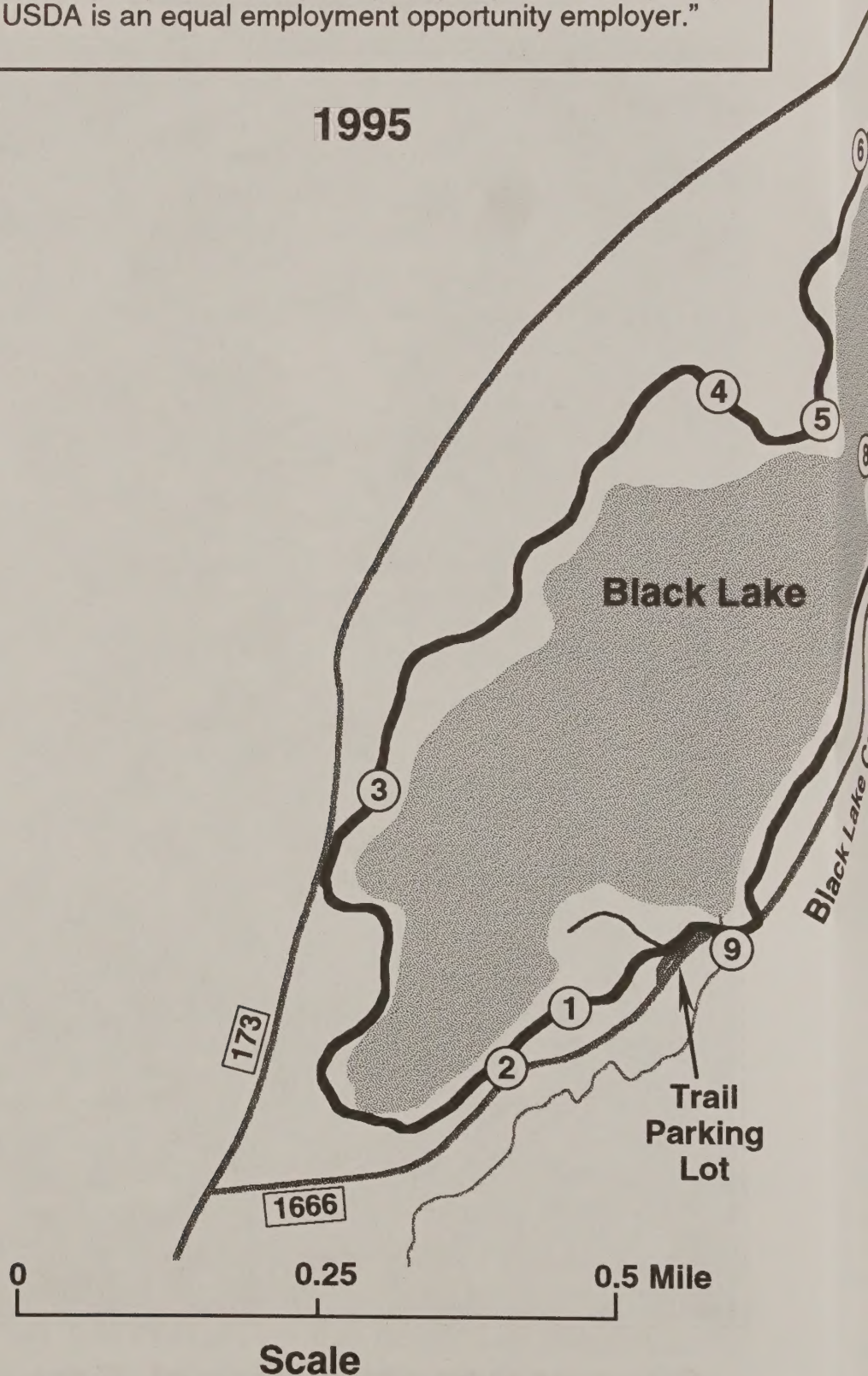
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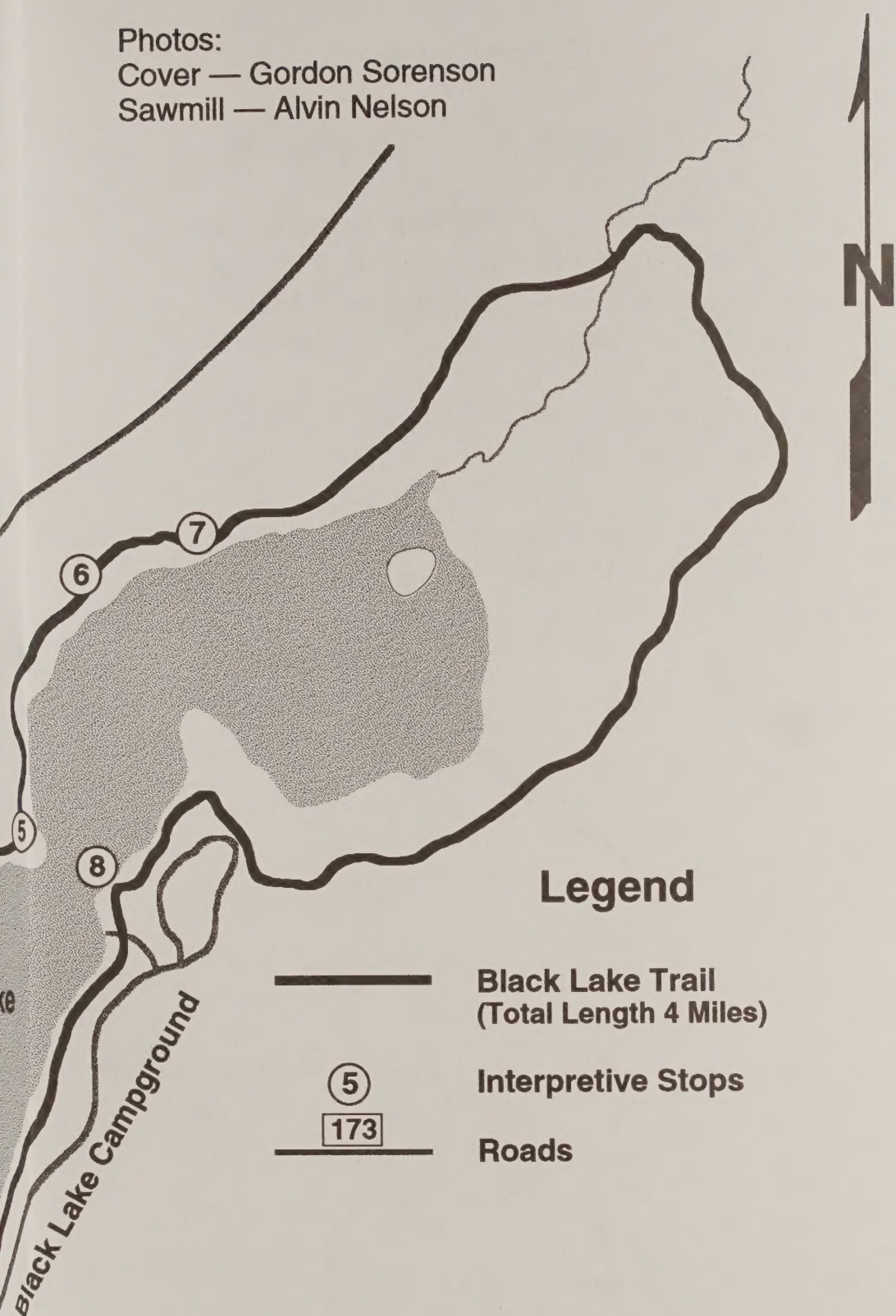
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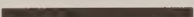




The interpretation of the logging history of Black Lake has been made possible by a donation from the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation.

Photos:
Cover — Gordon Sorenson
Sawmill — Alvin Nelson



Legend

-  Black Lake Trail
(Total Length 4 Miles)
-  Interpretive Stops
-  Roads

The Logging History of Black Lake

The Pine Era began about 1880 and ended about 1900 in this area. Much of the white pine cut around Black Lake was floated down Fishtrap Creek and the Chippewa River to Chippewa Falls where it was sawn into lumber. The lumber was then rafted down the Chippewa and Mississippi Rivers to St. Louis where it was shipped to the prairie states to provide building materials. In the pine days only the best logs were taken — it was common for loggers to cut

high stumps to get above the butt swell of the tree and then take only perfectly clear 16 foot logs, leaving the knotty second rate timber to rot in the woods. The term for cutting only the best timber is known as high grading.

The Hemlock and Hardwood Era lasted from 1909 to about 1924. This was by and large a second high grading of the forest where the best hardwood and hemlock trees were cut. A secondary goal of the hemlock and hardwood lumber companies was to clear the land and then sell it to homesteaders for farm land. Unfortunately the soil in this area was rocky and generally unsuitable for farming. Land clearing fires were often set to get rid of the slash and tops from the logging. The fires from 1900 to 1933 resulted in a scarred landscape where one could see for miles just by climbing up on a truck.

In the depression of the 1930's much of the land was deeded to Sawyer County for back taxes. In 1933 the Chequamegon National Forest was created by Congress. By 1940 the US Forest Service had purchased much of the land surrounding Black Lake from lumber companies and the county.

Black Lake Trail

Begin your hike on the trail by walking west from the parking lot on the path near the trail sign. Although the trail can be hiked in either direction the interpretation is written for hiking the trail clockwise. For the most part it is a narrow path through the woods nearly always within sight of Black Lake. The Black Lake Trail is 4 miles long and should take two hours to walk at a leisurely pace. There are 9 interpretive stops along the trail indicated by numbered posts at the edge of the trail.

For more information about the logging history of the area please contact:

The Sawyer County Historical Society and Museum,
PO Box 384, Hayward WI 54843
715-634-8350.

Interpretive Stops

1. In the pine and hemlock hardwood logging days this area was a hay field. Nearby was a caretaker's cabin for the logging dam at the outlet to Black Lake. In 1939 the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps stationed at Camp Sawyer planted the field to white spruce as part of the reforestation of the cutover forest.
2. To the left of the trail is the remains of a pine era logging camp. You can see mounds of earth which delineate the foundations of the old camp buildings. Please look around, but do not dig in this area. If the site is destroyed by digging, a part of our heritage will be gone forever.
3. Here the trail follows an old road along the west shore of Black Lake. The old road used the same location as the Stout Spur, an Edward Hines Lumber Company railroad that ran from Loretta to Black Lake and beyond. The old logging railroads were constructed on level ground — much of it swamp. The road was relocated in the 1930's to higher ground to make it passable in wet weather and to give better access to the forest west of Black Lake.
4. The squared cedar post at this point is a plantation corner post. The scribing on the post says that this is corner 14 of plantation 2 which was planted by Camp Sawyer CCC in October 1935. Many times these posts are mistaken for survey corners, however their only function was to delineate the boundaries of the CCC plantations. The second post is a counting post. The CCC kept detailed records of plantation costs and survival. This post is one end of a survival plot. Individual trees had lath stakes driven near them and survival counts were made for several years following planting to check on the success or failure of the plantations.

5. This point of land on the west shore of Black Lake is the location of an old CCC picnic ground which was popular in the 1930's. The picnic ground was abandoned sometime prior to 1960. All that remains of the picnic area is an old brick fireplace.

6. Hemlock bark was used by tanneries as a source of tannin for tanning leather in the early 1900's. Occasionally one will find piles of hemlock bark which were apparently left in the woods in the late 1920's due to poor markets, or perhaps an early spring breakup. In some instances hemlock was cut only for its bark, however in this area the bark was a byproduct of logging and was not the sole reason for logging hemlock stands.

7. In 1920 the New Dells Lumber Company purchased the timber on a large tract of land north of Black Lake and arranged to use Hines Company's railroad to haul the logs. Both the Dells and Hines Companies decked logs on the ice of Black Lake prior to loading on to railroad flat cars. An early spring thaw in the winter of 1921 melted the ice and the companies were unable to get all of the logs off of the ice in time. Since the logs were hardwood and hemlock, the majority of the logs sank after a short time.

During the next summer the two companies salvaged thousands of logs from the lake. About 1923 Hines removed the railroad and the Dells Company was unable to salvage and transport their remaining logs in the lake. About 1939 a portable sawmill was brought in to salvage some of the sunken logs. The mill was operated on the site of Hines Logging Camp Nine until the outbreak of World War II. From 1945 to 1947 Sawmill Johnson of Winter set up a mill on this site and salvaged more logs. Hundreds of logs still remain on the bottom of Black Lake. Some people believe that the dark color of the lake is due to the large amount of rotted bark and logs in the lake.



Portable Sawmill on the West Shore of Black Lake in 1941

8. In 1919 Edward Hines Lumber Company purchased the timber on the land adjacent to Black Lake from the Rice Lake Lumber Company. Hines was interested in the hardwood and hemlock timber on the tract. Since the hardwood and hemlock logs would not float as well as white pine logs, Hines built a railroad to transport the logs to the mill. Part of the railroad was a bridge across the narrow part of Black Lake. The remains of the bridge pilings can be seen on either shore where the bridge crossed the lake. The north loop of Black Lake Campground was constructed on the site of one of the Hines Lumber Company camps.

9. Black Lake is a flowage on Fishtrap Creek. In the pine logging days between 1880 and 1900 a rock and log dam was constructed at the outlet of Black Lake. White pine logs were decked on the ice and on the lake shore in the winter. In the spring when the snow melt and rains brought more water, the dam gates were opened and the logs and water were released to flow downstream to the nearest sawmill. In the 1930's the CCC's rebuilt the dam and built a road up to the dam. The CCC's also built a log bridge across the dam. The log bridge was replaced in 1962 when the campground was constructed.

Direction



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- From Hayward drive east 26 miles on Highway B.
- Turn left (north) on Fishtrap Road at the Highway B and W intersection and drive 4.8 miles to the intersection with FR 172.
- Continue straight (north) 3.3 miles on FR 172 to FR 173.
- Turn left (north) on FR 173 and drive 0.5 miles to the campground road (FR 1666).
- Turn right (east) on the black top road and drive 0.5 miles to the trail head which is a parking lot on the left (west) side of the road.



For more information contact:
Great Divide Ranger District
Hayward Office

Rt 10 Box 508

Hayward WI 54843

(715) 634-4821 (Voice and TTY)

Glidden Office

PO Box 126

Glidden WI 54527

(715) 264-2511 (Voice and TTY)